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# *Womens* **DRESSES** *and* **SLIPS**

## *A Buying Guide*

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# Women's DRESSES and SLIPS *A Buying Guide*

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every woman wants to buy the best dresses her means permit. Whether she has much or little to spend, the ability to make a wise choice means a great deal from the standpoint both of money outlay and of satisfaction. For the cost of dresses is a very important item in the clothing budget.

Good dresses last longer, look better, and are more comfortable to wear; but the industry, which turns out annually over 172 million dresses, produces all kinds and all qualities. The retail stores in turn show a wide range of prices and a wide choice of values within each price range. So a woman has to pick carefully to get the ones best suited to her needs and her pocketbook. Few of us however are expert judges of fabrics or of the construction of garments. Though the labels attached to ready-made dresses and slips are giving some help, more printed facts would benefit the manufacturer as well as the consumer. A woman then would know what service she could reasonably expect from her purchase, and there would be fewer complaints and returns to the retail stores.

## DRESSES

In modern stores and shops, dresses are fairly well classified as street, afternoon, and formal, and trained clerks know the kind to show when it is explained for what occasion the dress is wanted. Within a type, however, the purchaser has to pick her own best buy. She has to choose which is most becoming, best fits her social requirements, will give the desired service, can be cleaned satisfactorily without undue expense, and is reasonably priced in relation to the desired qualities. The salesperson can-

not know all the personal circumstances which should influence a customer's selection. So when buying a dress, be sure you are not unduly swayed but are using your own good judgment.

Whether a dress is for house wear or for the street, it is well to get the best of its kind that can be afforded. Sometimes women buy several inexpensive dresses rather than a few good ones, believing that to be the secret of good dressing. But dresses of poor material and workmanship are short-lived. Many women find that fewer but better dresses are more economical in the long run.

## *The Fabric*

After satisfactory design and color are found, consider the fabric quality carefully. The rapid increase of materials with new and strange names appearing from season to season sometimes makes choice bewildering. New

fibers, new weaves, new finishes are constantly changing the appearance and feel of fabrics. The old-time ways of identifying natural fibers are no longer dependable. Many pure linens, for example, are so treated that they no longer crush. What appears to be wool may be rayon instead. Soft, silky looking material is sometimes highly mercerized cotton.



both good and poor qualities of pure silk, good and poor qualities of all wool. The yarn and the weave of a material need to be examined.

Price also is not a dependable guide to the quality of a dress. From season to season the cost of production and materials varies, making it difficult for manufacturers to maintain uniform quality in the same price lines. Also the cost of a dress may be higher because of exclusive design or because it is made of an unusual fabric. So, as an aid in judging quality, learn to feel and see the differences between fabrics. Examine raw edges inside the dress where yarns may be seen separately. Note firmness or tendency to fray or stretch and likelihood of snagging, fuzzing up, or pulling at the seams.

## Cotton

Cottons are the easiest of all fabrics to judge, probably because they are less likely to be cheapened or imitated than some of the more expensive fibers. Nevertheless, there are cotton dresses of both good and poor quality.

No one set of rules can serve as a complete buying guide for the wide variety of cottons designed to suit all needs. The types are so varied, ranging from delicate laces, organdies, and voiles to stronger and heavier fabrics such as gabardine, pique, and velveteen. In general, however, dress cottons need to be strong enough for the kind of wear for which they are bought. For example, a dainty voile is serviceable for summer-afternoon wear, but for housework a strong percale is suitable. In all cottons, whatever the type, smooth yarns that will not fuzz up are best, and firmness both ways of the material helps in preserving the shape of a dress. Fabrics such as sheer seersucker, crepe, and matelasse, unless guaranteed against loss of shape, stretch and become baggy within a short time.

Hold material up to the light so as to see the actual weave. Also rub it if there are signs of sizing or other surface finish that may wash out, though cotton materials cheapened in this way are not so common now as they were a few years ago. Materials of this sort usually shrink excessively and become limp and shapeless when washed.

Washing is the customary and sensible way of cleaning most cotton dresses, so minimum shrinkage is a very important point in buying a good dress. Depend only on definite facts, not vague statements, about shrinkage. If possible, find out not only whether a dress will or will not shrink, but in case of shrinkage, how much.

Printed tags provided by the manufacturer are the best and safest way of getting this information. The trade-practice rules of the Federal Trade Commission on shrinkage are now in effect, and printed facts concerning this point must be accurately stated. In case a dress is labeled preshrunk, shrinkproof, or full-shrunk, the purchaser can rightfully expect absolutely no shrinkage in washing. However, few dress cottons are of the type that are not stretched somewhat in the finishing processes. This naturally counteracts in a degree the most thorough shrinking process, and because of that, under the new rules tags often bear such precise statements as "Residual shrinkage 1 percent." This accurate labeling of fabrics as regards shrinkage marks an advance in textile



Be sure a wash dress is completely washable.

manufacture and is of great help to the woman who wants to buy dresses with lasting fit.

Whenever there are no statements about shrinkage, the dress can probably be expected to shrink somewhat. Sometimes the tag or a clerk will advise buying a larger size than is ordinarily worn, or attention is called to a wide hem and special outlet seams at the sides. Either plan is unsatisfactory considering the uncertainty of fit and the time and trouble involved in making alterations. It would be better to pay the higher price that might be necessary for cottons guaranteed not to shrink more than 1 or 2 percent.

Cottons are as yet most used in the summer, even though types for winter wear are becoming increasingly popular, so they need to be colorfast to washing, to sunlight, and to perspiration. Here again, informative labels bearing definite statements are essential because color permanence is another quality that cannot be seen or felt. Verbal statements are no protection in case a dress fades.

Special finishes have both changed and improved the natural qualities of many cottons. Though some of these may carry names unfamiliar to the purchaser, she can ask about the advantages of a finish, how long it will last, whether or not it requires special care, and if the cost is higher because of it.

A crease-resistant finish on cottons lessens wrinkling and helps them to keep their shape and stay clean longer. Some of the cottons on which a special finish has been used successfully are crash, voile, and gingham.

Cottons treated for resistance to wrinkling should not be confused with others such as cotton lace or crinkled organdy which by their nature do not wrinkle easily. So when a dress bears a "crease resistant" tag with no further information, ask if it has been subjected to a special process. This will help in weighing its value in relation to price.

Water-repellent finishes are of more practical value on such cottons as corduroys, which are used in dresses that will be washed or dry-cleaned comparatively few times. This finish prevents spots and keeps the cotton from soiling readily.

## Linen

Good dress linens are more expensive than the average cotton, but for certain dresses the special qualities of linen may be worth the extra cost. In any case the purchaser wants to know that a dress for which she pays a "linen price" is all linen—not less expensive fibers woven to look like linen or even a mixture of linen with some other fiber.

For some purposes, part-linen dresses that combine the characteristics of two fibers are desirable. But the point remains that the purchaser wants to know what her dress fabric consists of and how much of it is linen. These facts give her an idea as to the qualities she can expect, and they also serve as a price guide.

Linen is now more satisfactory as a dress fabric because of the finishes that counteract excessive wrinkling. Also its use has been extended by the development of new yarns, new weaves, and new designs. In addition to the sports outfits for which it was heretofore most used, it is now frequently made into street, afternoon, and evening dresses.

When buying linens with crease-resistant finishes remember that there is a difference in the effectiveness of the processes used. Some of these linens resist wrinkles better than others, but as yet no way has been developed for giving this information to the purchaser. Until some standard marking is adopted, probably the most practical way of judging this quality is to crush the linen tightly in your hand, and then note how quickly and completely the wrinkles fall out when it is released. The finishes that give the most spring and life to the fabric last the longest. It is to be expected, though, that the finish will gradually become less effective with repeated washing.

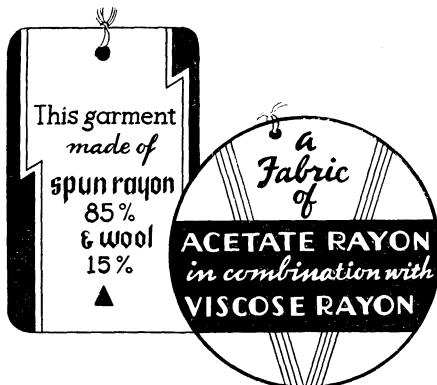
Wrinkle-resistant linens, unlike those without such treatment, tend to stretch wherever there is strain, as in the seat of skirts. It is well, therefore, to choose skirt styles that are slightly flared, instead of straight. Also, do not expect this linen to be as cool as the untreated. If a cool as well as crease-resistant linen is desired, select one of the sheer or open weaves, such as hop sacking, which admits air. Treated linens resist soil more than the untreated and in most cases they are easier to iron. Little, if any, pressing is needed between launderings.

Linens, like cottons, are warm-weather fabrics and so need to be colorfast to sun, washing, and perspiration. Minimum shrinkage is also essential to permanent fit, and because these are hidden qualities look for a label giving definite printed facts.

## Rayon

There are three types of rayon generally used in women's dresses—those made by acetate, viscose, and cuprammonium processes. These chemical methods are very different, but when it comes to selecting the finished fabric, it is a matter of learning whether the dress you buy is an acetate or a regenerated cellulose. Viscose and cuprammonium rayons are classed as the cellulose type. Acetates require particular caution in pressing. Unless the temperature of the iron is kept low they will melt, and the dress will be ruined.

Rayon has no typical appearance as do the natural fibers. It may be used in filament form, or these long filaments may be cut up into staple length and spun into yarns to make the so-called spun-rayon fabrics. In this way rayon can be adapted to practically all types of fabrics, from shiny satins to dull wool-like textures—as coarse as crash or as fine as chiffon. In many cases it is combined with natural fibers. Oftentimes two kinds of rayons



Labels like these state the fibers in the fabric.

percentage of acetate and a smaller amount of silk requires the special care necessary for acetates. Also, in considering the price it is more helpful to know that a dress contains, for example, 85 percent of wool and 15 percent of acetate rayon, rather than just "wool and rayon."

Washable rayons most used are chiffons, sheers, and spun rayon resembling linen. All of these are inexpensive, yet generally serviceable and practical. Rayon sheers with fine yarns and close weaves are better buys than those with more open weaves and coarse yarns that catch and pull. Many also soon stretch and pull at the seams, particularly in skirts. Even tightness of the weave is a special point in buying sheers that are patterned. Sometimes a gentle pull will cause yarns to shift and blur the pattern.

Rayons woven to look like linen are for the most part treated for crease resistance. Untreated, they wrinkle badly, and even slight dampness causes them to droop and look wilted. Though such fabrics are likely to fray deeply at the seams when washed, the fraying can be controlled if manufacturers will allow generous seams and finish them in a way appropriate for the fabric and style of the dress. Narrow seams pinked on the edges, the most common finish now used, are not satisfactory and cause many complaints and the return of much merchandise.

There are many nonwashable types of rayons. Rayon jersey makes practical dresses that stand lots of hard wear and do not wrinkle readily. The many novelty crepes may or may not be good buys. In general, it is the deep crepes with a lot of stretch and those with floating surface yarns that cause the most trouble. Velvets, some of which are even sold as washable, are in general satisfactory, particularly if treated for crush resistance. However, some treated velvets develop an unpleasant odor when worn; so, when buying, it is a good thing to ask about this.

Rayons that look like wools, and even go by such well-known names as challis and alpaca, often wear well; but, unlike real wool, some of these develop a grayish surface nap and wrinkle badly.

are used together. It is practically impossible to know without informative labels what fibers actually make up modern dress fabrics and what kind of care they should have.

Fortunately many dresses now bear tags that state "Made of spun rayon" or "Spun rayon and linen" or "Wool and rayon." What is even more helpful is a tag giving the percentage of each fiber in a mixture and telling the kind of rayon used. A fabric containing a higher per-

Stiff rayons, such as taffeta and moire, are inexpensive and look very well, particularly for evening dresses. Unlike silk taffetas that often split because of excessive weighting, rayon taffetas last reasonably well, but they must be pressed with care.

The points to consider in buying rayons are as varied as the fabrics themselves, but in general look for a strong yarn. Some rayons have broken filaments in the yarns that later cause small holes. Others will snag, mash, fuzz up, or become shiny with wear and pressing. Because rayon dresses sometimes stretch excessively, examine the weave and pull the material both ways. This test is not always dependable though, as some fabrics that seem firm when you handle them may stretch to excess in dry cleaning, even to the point of requiring alterations to restore proper fit and length.

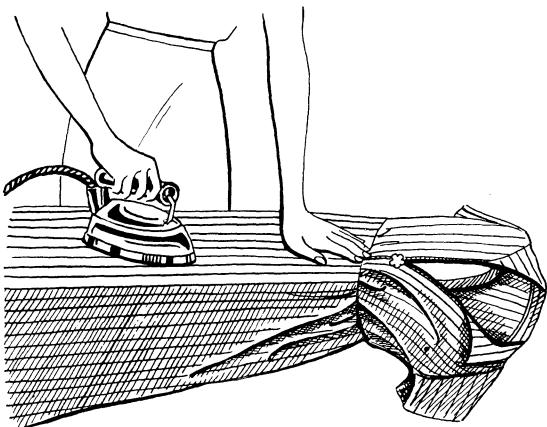
Frayage and seam pulling are less troublesome in rayons that are dry-cleaned rather than washed. As a guard against fraying look for wide seam allowances and secure seam finishes. On some tags attached to rayon dresses there are statements such as "seam tested," "nonslip," "seamproof," or "tested seaming qualities." Even so, unless the dress has generous allowances, rayons cannot, like other materials, be depended on to hold.

Color permanence is essential in a good rayon dress. In general, the colors are not so permanent as in fabrics of natural fibers, and a dress may be gradually faded by atmospheric gases, sunlight, or cleaning.

Many times the color changes across the shoulders and chest where it touches the skin. This means loss of a dress long before the fabric has given reasonable service.

## Silk

The best quality dress silks are "pure silk" or "all silk," rather than weighted. The trade-practice rules set up by the Federal Trade Commission state that when such terms as these, as well as "pure dye" or even the word "silk" alone, are used on any fabrics, except black, they must contain no more than 10 percent of metallic salts, other fibers, or substances. For black silks as much as 15 percent weighting is allowable.



Know your rayons before you iron.

Dresses made of excessively weighted silk become tender and often fall to pieces even when left hanging in a closet and only worn occasionally. Weighted silks also become shiny and darken with wear as if soiled; wrinkles are deep set and difficult to remove; colors are seldom dependable. Weighted silks are not as widely used in women's dresses now as they were a few years ago. In their place are rayons, which cost no more and give better service than excessively weighted silks.

Good dress silks must be firmly woven so that the yarns will not snag, shift, or slip, causing pulled seams and ugly bulges across the shoulders, under the arms, and through the hips. Shrinking and stretching, while much less troublesome in silks than in rayons, need to be considered when one is buying a good-quality silk dress. Deeply crinkled silks will usually stretch to excess, and those made with tightly twisted yarns that spring back with kinks and twists when pulled from the fabric are likely to draw up. Better are the firm, regular weaves that give little in either direction. They are more likely to keep their shape through wear and cleaning.

In buying summer silks, or tub silks, shrinkage and permanence of color are points about which to get definite facts. Not only should the colors be fast to washing, but to sunlight and to perspiration as well. This information is best obtained from a printed tag. To learn that a dress is washable is not enough. That may mean only that the material can stand washing. It is no assurance that the colors are fast or that there will be no shrinkage. Yet, assurance of this sort is somewhat difficult to get inasmuch as stores generally contend that women wash dresses incorrectly and then ask for unreasonable adjustments. Because of that point for argument, many stores recommend dry cleaning regardless of the material. Washing is then done at the purchaser's risk.

## **Wool**

Though wool fabrics now used in ready-made dresses are different in weave and texture from the staples of years ago, the marks of quality remain the same. Good-quality wool fabrics have long, high-grade, undamaged fibers spun into firmly twisted yarns which are woven evenly.

There are two main types of wool dress materials—worsteds and woolens. True worsteds are made of long, fine-quality combed wool fibers. The fabrics have clear weaves and firm finishes so that the materials wear well, keep their shape, and do not hold wrinkles. Because of the smoothness of worsteds, many women with sensitive skins can wear worsted dresses, while woolens with surface finishes are irritating. Examples of worsteds are challis, gabardine, and crepe.

Woolens are made of shorter fibers, and the fabrics are generally heavier and warmer than worsteds. Also, the cloth is fulled and felted, which makes it possible for manufacturers who choose to do so, to mix in short, inferior wool or other less expensive fibers. In cases where all wool of good quality is desirable and the purchaser is not informed of the fiber

content and quality, such fabrics are likely to prove disappointing. However, for certain dresses, mixed woolens are very satisfactory. It is often stated on informative tags what fibers are used, as well as the amount of each.

In washable wools for summer wear, wool mixed with cotton or rayon is generally more satisfactory than all wool. While preserving the texture and appearance of wool, the mixed materials are usually cooler, and they can be washed with less danger of shrinkage. Unless treated for resistance to wrinkling, wool mixed with cotton, rayon, or linen will naturally wrinkle more than all wool, as these fibers are less elastic. It depends on the amount of other fibers present whether the fabric takes on more of their characteristics or behaves like wool.

The best value for the money in all-wool fabrics is in staples rather than in high-style novelties. Yet, because many ready-made dresses are of fashionable rather than staple fabrics, it is well to understand that part of the price may be due merely to popularity of the fabric.

Examples are the hairy wools from which the hair soon rubs off, some of the very thin plain wools that have little strength, and the mixtures of wool and feathers from which the downy surface quickly disappears, leaving bald spots. Staples such as gabardine or broadcloth come back into fashion occasionally; then their price goes up just as high as if they were something new. But these materials, unlike novelties that come and go, make serviceable dresses.

When buying an all-wool or even a part-wool dress, find out as much as you can about the quality of the wool. Few dresses are without a few loose yarns inside that can be examined without damage to the dress. Then, look closely at the weave to see that it is of even weight—not thin in some places and thick in others. Oftentimes, surface nap or other finish hides this. Note also the amount of stretch both ways and learn whether or not there is a guaranty against loss of shape and excessive shrinkage. Any wool will continue to shrink some with each steam pressing, but like cotton, rayon, and linen, wool fabrics can now be preshrunk to the extent that the fit of the dress does not change noticeably in the usual dry cleaning.

Colors permanent to sun, perspiration, and dry cleaning are desirable in wool dresses. For winter wear in cold climates, they are generally protected from strong light by a coat. But for sports clothes, which are worn out of doors in all kinds of wind and weather, colorfastness of the wool fabric is very important.



Colors fast to sun, perspiration, and cleaning.

## *Size and Fit*

Women's ready-made dresses are marked for size by bust measure from 32 to 42 or more, and by age so-called, from 14 up to 20 years. Unfortunately there is no standardization in either of these systems, nor do the two parallel each other accurately. When a woman goes into a store to buy a dress, she has no assurance that any two dresses marked the same will fit the same. Nor can she be sure that a dress marked "36," for instance, will have certain corresponding measures in waist, hip, and other points important to comfort and fit.



The waistline should be a straight line around the figure. Women with flat chests or short waists are often troubled with the waistline of a dress slipping down below the belt; on erect women it may pull up above the natural waistline.

Skirts, whether straight-line or full, should be a comfortable width at the lower edge so that it is possible to walk easily and naturally. Skirts styled to fit smoothly about the hips, should be slightly loose and never tight. If tight, they are unflattering to the figure and pull up into folds just below the waistline. For sitting there is always need of extra room. Without this the back of the skirt will stretch out of shape, and the seams

will be strained or even pull out. The side seams of a skirt should hang straight from the waist. If they swing to the front, the back of the skirt will cup under the figure.

Consider also the size and fit of a dress in relation to the purpose for which you are buying it. For example, if it is a house dress, walk, reach, and sit to make certain that the dress does not shift. Test the "give" through the shoulders. See if the sleeves let you reach without catching on your arms, and consider whether the neckline will be cool and comfortable. If you spend much time driving a car, give the same thought to comfort in dress shoulders and sleeves, and be sure there is enough room in the skirt so seams will not pull and the back stretch out of shape.

Room for action is not quite so necessary in dresses for street or office wear. But a woman who spends the day at a desk is better able to concentrate on the job if her dresses fit so she is not aware of armholes, neckline, sleeves, or skirt. She needs dresses in which she can sit all day and still appear well when the time comes to go out on the street. That means skirts simply styled, yet with the ample room for sitting that a conservative flare provides. If the skirt is tight either because of size or fit, ugly lap wrinkles will soon develop and eventually the back will become misshapen and ill-hanging. Skirts with back fullness, pleats, and wide flares, although attractive in clothes designed for other occasions, are soon "sat out" at the office.

There is much more leeway in dresses for social occasions. But they too should fit so as to assure comfort as well as pleasing appearance. There is much more pleasure in dancing, for instance, if the frock is so fitted that it stays securely in place but still allows enough room for graceful movement. For dinner wear, a closer-fitting dress is often more practical, but the skirt should allow ample room for sitting.



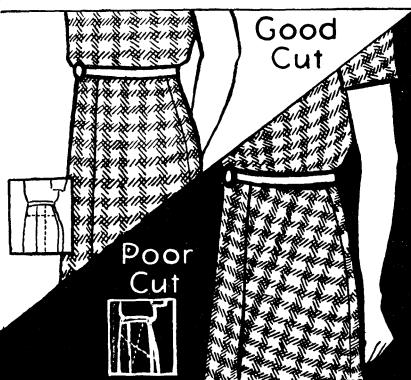
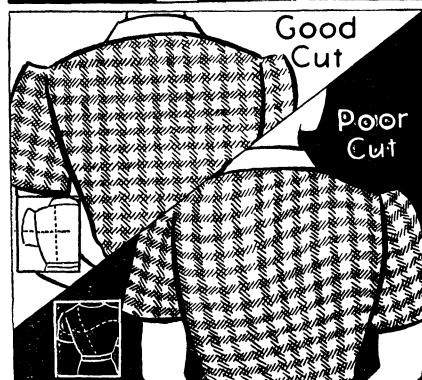
# *The Cut*

A dress can fit neatly and keep its shape only if each pattern piece has been laid so that the thread runs accurately—whether crosswise, lengthwise, or bias. Yet, it is not uncommon in ready-made dresses to see crosswise threads running downhill instead of straight across the back and chest, and skirts supposed to be true bias twisting and sagging into uneven, one-sided flares. This is likely to happen when in the endeavor to produce volumes of dresses at low cost a great pile of material is laid out and many dresses instead of a few are cut at one time. Unless this is carefully done, the material shifts, and even though pressing does much to make poorly cut dresses look right as long as they hang in the store, they lose their shape and fit in actual use. Wear is also lessened because wry cut causes abnormal strain on fabrics and seams.

In checking the cut of a dress look closely at the grain of the fabric in the sleeves and across the chest and shoulders. In a plain sleeve, properly cut, crosswise threads run straight across the upper arm as it hangs down at the side; lengthwise threads drop straight from the highest point of the shoulder. Whenever the threads slant, as they do many times, pouches of fullness can

be noticed, and the fit will be uncomfortable and strained.

Skirts are more difficult to check for accurate cut because some styles require that the pattern be placed in unusual ways. For example, on a very flared skirt the lengthwise thread of the goods runs on the diagonal instead of straight up and down. But it is always possible to see that both sides



of the skirt are exactly alike. If they are different, trouble in fit and hang is almost certain.

Also see that seam lines, particularly in the skirt, on the shoulders, and around armholes, are free of ugly bulges. While uneven seaming is often the cause, bulging may also come from careless and crooked cutting and will spoil the appearance of a dress. A neat job of ironing or pressing is practically impossible when seam lines are not accurate.

## *Seams and Stitching*

A good dress has no more seams than are necessary to the design and proper fit. Many times there are seams with no purpose so far as the design of the dress is concerned—up the back of a straight skirt or a plain waist, at the center front of a closed waist, or under a band of applied trimming. These make it possible for the manufacturer to save on material, and though the dress may wear all right it can never look as well nor will it be as easy to care for as a dress correctly made. Also if you are buying a dress with the idea of removing trim that does not suit, be sure to check for concealed seams.

There should be no piecings except in styles so flared or full that proper placement of pattern pieces would extend beyond the usual yardage width. Then they should be neat and, if the material is napped or patterned, carefully matched so as to make them inconspicuous. In any case, piecings should be cut the same way of the goods as the dress. Otherwise the seam line may pucker and ripple, especially after cleaning.

Examine the full length of seams. To simply turn up the lower edge of a skirt and look, is not enough, for dress seams are usually at their best there. Instead, look where there is likely to be trouble—about the waist, around the armholes, over the curve of the hips—in fact, every place where seams slant or curve. These require greater care and less speed in stitching, so they are likely to be most irregular and quick to pull out.

Good seam allowance and proper finish varies with the material—whether it is thick or thin, heavyweight or lightweight, firm or loose in weave and whether or not it will fray readily. How the dress is to be cleaned also has to be considered.

Of course nothing can take the place of proper seam allowance. Occasionally it may be possible for the purchaser to save money by refinishing the seams herself on a dress priced low because little attention has been given to details of workmanship. Such dresses must be chosen with special care, however, if good value is to be obtained.

On such firm fabrics as percale, pique, and shantung, plain seams if they are about one-half inch wide and simply pinked or overcast on the edge serve very well. But this finish is not enough for more loosely woven fabrics such as crash, linen, spun rayons, and hop sacking. In addition to generous seam allowances, these materials must have secure seam

finishes to prevent deep frayage. Net binding in addition to generous seam allowance checks frayage without adding bulk.

Soft lightweight materials, such as silk crepe, tub silk, and lawn, can be durably made with seams about one-half or five-eighths of an inch wide of the self-stitched type—that is, turned under along the cut edges and stitched. Not only does this type of seam make a secure finish, but it also gives the body and strength needed with soft fabrics to prevent stretching.

Sheers, through which construction is readily seen, require still different kinds of seams. They must be narrow, yet none the less secure. Marquisette, chiffon, voile, and the like, are quick to fray and pull out; so French seams, or those turned in and stitched, or double-stitched and net-bound, will hold and give a neat finish. The plain, unfinished, fraying seams so common in thin dresses are unsightly as well as insecure.

All finished seams are not necessarily secure however. For example, wash dresses designed for home use are often made with standing fells. In making these, one side of a plain seam is trimmed away. The other side is then folded and stitched down over this. As finished, that kind of seam appears to be secure, but many times the trimmed side is cut so close to the stitching line that it quickly pulls out. Yet you have no way of knowing this when you buy. Another finished seam common in house dresses has scarcely more than one-eighth or one-quarter of an inch seam allowance. In one operation it is either lock-stitched or bound. Like the standing fell, this finish looks neat enough as you buy the dress, but washing and wear soon cause it to pull out in all except fabrics such as thick percales.

Thread, length of stitch, and tension should suit the weight of the dress material. As a rule, there are about 15 stitches to the inch in a good dress but as few as 7 to the inch in low-grade dresses. More than that, thread ends are fastened in good dresses but left dangling in poor ones. This means mending unless they are fastened before the dress is worn.

Correctly adjusted stitching looks the same on both sides and holds securely. In contrast, poorly adjusted stitching looks different on the two sides. On one side it will seem to be a straight thread stretched taut along the cloth and held loosely by little loops from the opposite side. Stitching of this kind gives, breaks easily, and allows seams to spread and stretch.

  
There is safety in generous seam allowances, especially on the curves.

Thread perfectly matched in color is necessary to the good appearance of a dress. Sometimes an entirely different color is used for inside seaming, or the top thread of outside stitching may match while the under one does

not. The thread should also be fast to light and to the kind of cleaning the dress requires. Many times thread gradually becomes lighter, or it may even change in color to the extent of being conspicuous. In wash dresses thread that bleeds and leaves streaks and spots is still commonly used, even when the fabrics are guaranteed fast to washing. Whenever this occurs, it is not unreasonable to ask the store for an adjustment.

## *Hems and Finishes*

Ready-made dresses should have generous hems so that they can be adapted to persons of various heights. Even though the extra length in skirt and sleeves may not be needed, a woman buys a dress with greater satisfaction if she knows the goods is there to make adjustments. Tall women, particularly, often find dresses that suit in every way except that the hems are too narrow to furnish the needed length. There are, of course, certain styles such as widely flared skirts that should not have wide hems, but the original hem should be sufficient to allow for the changes bound to come in hanging the dress to fit an individual.

In good dresses hems are invisibly stitched to the dress. In dresses to be dry-cleaned the edge should, in most cases, be finished with a firm ribbon binding, then blind-stitched or catch-stitched to the dress. In wash dresses, except those made of very thick materials, stitching the first fold of the hem by machine and then blind-stitching it to the dress makes a good finish. It simplifies ironing as well as alteration. For heavy materials, net binding (footing) makes a good edge finish; it prevents raveling and also keeps the edge flat.

Examine all facings and bindings. Properly applied, they fit perfectly and help preserve the shape of a dress. If edges such as those at the neckline are stretched in applying a binding or facing, ugly ripples will keep the dress from setting to the neck. On the other hand, if the edge is pulled in too tight, the material will hump.

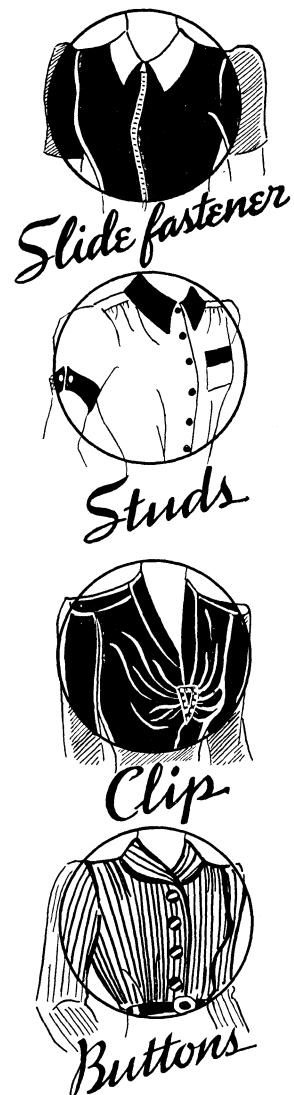
Good plackets are ample in length, secure at the ends, neatly fitted, and as flat and inconspicuous as possible. They must be long enough for a dress to be easily put on and removed. So as to save on fasteners, some dresses are made with too-short plackets. This means discomfort and annoyance and often results in damage to the dress.

Another finish to notice, particularly on cotton wash dresses, is that for turn-back cuffs. Oftentimes they are simply seamed to the sleeve edge, then turned back and seamed in with the sleeve. Such cuffs cannot be turned down at the seam; they are tedious to iron, and it is practically impossible to iron them well. In contrast, cuffs applied after the sleeves are seamed can be turned down and ironed neatly and easily.

As protection against the strain that naturally comes at such places as pocket corners and where buttons are sewed on, reinforcements are needed.

Double stitching, tape on the under side, and worked bars, are examples of little details that help dresses wear longer. They are purposely inconspicuous or out of sight; you see them only when you look for them, but they often prevent the rips and tears that would ruin a dress. Women who want good dresses soon learn to appreciate these little touches because they mean better service. If one buys a dress without these reinforcements, it is a wise plan to go over it before wearing and stay places likely to break or tear.

## *Fastenings and Trim*



Fastenings on women's dresses are of two main types—those that trim and fasten, and those that are hidden and merely fasten. In the first group are buttons, stud sets, slide fasteners, buckles, clips, pins, lacings, and countless novelties. And of the second type, utilitarian only, are plain metal snaps, and hooks and eyes. But all fasteners, whether they trim or simply fasten, do much to help or cheapen the appearance of a dress. They can also affect its wear.

In buying a wash dress, make certain that the fastenings are also washable. That means not only that they can be put through soap and water and still function as fasteners but that their shape, color, strength, and finish will withstand the rigors of washing and ironing for the lifetime of the dress. Pearl, unpainted glass, and porcelainlike buttons are good. Most impractical, although commonly used, are buttons of raffia, painted glass, stained wood, or fabric over metal molds that rust. These will not stand washing, so tags attached to the dresses frequently advise "Remove all trimmings before washing." Many times this means taking off and putting on again a dozen or more buttons—a needless chore inasmuch as washable buttons can be had, and with guarantees based on tests.

On dresses to be dry-cleaned, fastenings do not have to be as sturdy as for wash dresses. Dry cleaners generally remove them anyway. Yet, colors should neither fade nor change with exposure to light, and there should be nothing

about the fasteners to break easily or come apart. Extra buttons are now provided with some dresses, but in case they are not, the loss of one button, which can rarely be matched, means buying a whole new set. And it is well to remember that some kinds of buttons such as metal or glass are more easily lost than others because they often have sharp eyelets that cut the thread. Buttons glued or cemented together generally fall apart; those covered with loosely woven fabric pull out; and glass breaks easily. Also buttons with rough, decorated edges quickly wear out buttonholes or loops.

Buttonholes are worked or bound. Bound buttonholes require painstaking workmanship and more time than can be afforded on the lower grade dresses. So they are not likely to be durable except in high-quality merchandise. Good machine-worked buttonholes are more common. To wear well, they must have close, even stitches sufficiently deep to keep them from pulling out of the fabric, and the thread should be lustrous and smooth. Buttonholes with widely spaced stitches and dangling threads do not wear well, and they are usually made with weak thread and a stitch that ravelles. One pull at a dangling thread, and a whole buttonhole may have to be reworked.

Colorfastness of the thread in buttonholes is highly important. But it is not uncommon for dresses—even those of fast-color fabrics—to be ruined in the first wash by bleeding buttonholes. Seldom, if ever, are there any statements or informative tags about the colorfastness of thread, but a woman has the right to expect it whenever a dress is sold as colorfast.

Slide fasteners, both plastic and metal, are now widely used in women's dresses. In plackets, lightweight metal fasteners properly set in can make a smooth, neat closing with none of the ugly gaps caused by poor placement of snaps. Also, they are quick and easy to adjust. However, even the most flexible fastener of this type is too stiff for dresses with bloused waists, and a bumpy metal pull hinders neat pressing. Plastic fasteners are decorative when installed without fabric covering, but they are less sturdy than those of metal, and they require special caution in pressing lest a hot iron melt them. With reasonable care, though, they give good service.



Decorative snap fasteners with metal or enamel tops are now used in many dresses of the sturdier fabrics. They make a close, flat closing, less likely to gap than one with buttons and buttonholes. Also, they are easy to manage; and, used on firm, strong fabrics, they do not pull out and tear the fabric as do buttons not properly reinforced. As with other fasteners, find out, if possible, whether or not snaps will chip and can be expected to last as long as the dress.

Metal snaps and hooks and eyes are strictly utilitarian. When right in size and properly spaced and sewed on, snaps make a neat placket fastening. In many ready-made dresses though, these fasteners are too large and too few, and are carelessly sewed on with bulky thread that calls attention to their presence. It is usually necessary to resew them.

Trim, other than fastenings, is of varied material. It may be a contrasting fabric, embroidery, applique, flowers, braid, lace, ribbon, nail heads, fur, leather, and countless other materials. Too often decoration on ready-made dresses is overdone and purposeless. It is well to stick to the simple and conservative, which actually adds to the dress.

Trim should be comparable to the dress in quality. Anything that cannot be cleaned but must be discarded as soon as it is soiled, is usually expensive and hard to replace. Neither is it good for two fabrics to be combined if they must be cleaned in different ways. White or light trim that cannot be removed for washing becomes gray and soiled on a dress that has to be dry-cleaned. Also because the white trim shows soil readily, the entire dress has to be cleaned more often, thus increasing cost of upkeep. However, contrasts such as collars and cuffs made to snap on and off quickly for laundering actually cut down cleaning costs by protecting the neck and sleeve lines of the dress.

In selecting a wash dress remember that every feature of cut and trimming as well as the fabric needs to be of a type easy to wash and iron. Finely pleated frillings and attached trim of nonwashable material are examples of what to avoid in selecting a dress that is truly washable. If the dress is to be dry-cleaned it may be more elaborate, but even then it is better to pick a design that can be pressed neatly.

On a dress bought for service avoid trim that will tarnish, rust, cut the fabric, be easily marred, or pull out in ordinary usage. Some metallic trim becomes tarnished and old-looking in a very short time. Stones and nailheads cut the fabric and drop out, and shiny trim becomes dull and worn looking.

Braid, stitching, lace, and ribbon in good qualities may give satisfaction as trim if properly used and neatly applied. Attached trim of this kind should be as cleanable as the dress and not hinder neat pressing. Also, it should not be so placed as to interfere with lengthening or shortening the skirt when more than one season's wear is expected.

Artificial flowers are pleasing for dress trim if they are harmonious in coloring, fresh looking, and made of good substantial materials.

Self-trim, such as shirring, tucking, or pleating, is very effective; but if done well, it runs the cost of a dress high in relation to its fabric value because of the time and skillful workmanship required. In a dress so trimmed, look for accurate workmanship and securely fastened threads.

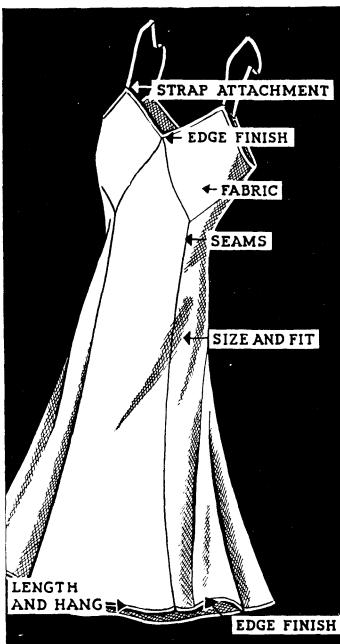
Belts also trim a dress, and a good one can often be used with several dresses. When made of the same material as the dress, a belt should be as easily cleaned as the dress. A belt backed with a coated imitation-leather fabric cannot be either dry-cleaned or washed satisfactorily. Colorfastness is another point important in a belt. Colored leather, contrasting fabrics, and metal oftentimes rub off on dresses, leaving stains and smudges that cannot be removed. Buckles also need to be well made because they have to stand a great deal of rub.

## COSTUME SLIPS

The costume slip, whether of silk, rayon, or cotton, is intended to supplement and improve the appearance of the dress and protect it from body soil. Occasionally, the slip is part of a dress design; then it is included in the dress purchase. But whether bought in this way or chosen separately, as the majority of slips are, the points of quality are the same. The cloth from which it is made, the style, accuracy of cut, smoothness of fit, and suitability of sewing and finishing all play an important part in the general effect of the slip with a dress.

Silks most used in slips are satin and French crepes in both pure and weighted qualities. Pure silks almost always out-wear weighted silks of the same type. Because slips are worn between a foundation garment and a dress they get much rubbing, which quickly wears holes in weighted silks. Also they crack and break along stitching lines. Much more serviceable are the pure silks of firm, close weave that will not shift or fuzz up with use. Nor should material contain excessive sizing that comes out in the first wash, leaving a soft, limp fabric.

Sizing is difficult to discover merely by looking at a fabric and feeling it. In general, though, silk fabrics with excessive sizing and weighting feel more crisp, and show the fold wrinkles more sharply than the pure silk goods. Look for a tag that gives definite facts about this quality.



The rayons most used in slips are of the French-crepe type. There are some rayon satins; but unless these are part silk, they are usually not so flexible as is desirable for slip fabrics. Metallic weighting is not a problem in rayons used in slips, but oftentimes there is a starchlike sizing that gives a dull appearance and a feeling of firmness. This sizing comes out in the first wash and leaves a shiny, limp, and thin slip of little wearing quality. As with silk, rayons with yarns close together give a firm and permanent body and wear best.

Good rayon slips are less expensive than those of good silk, and they wear well if securely seamed. Rayons wrinkle more readily than silk, but white rayons will remain white after laundering while white silks become yellow. Rayons are usually not so easily and quickly ironed as silk, and acetate rayon requires special care lest it be damaged by a hot iron. Even with care, rayon slips are inclined to become glassy and eventually break into holes at places where there are several thicknesses of material. In cold weather acetate slips tend to cling to the wearer as well as to the dress.

The cottons used in slips are broadcloth, cambric, nainsook, and crepe. Many women prefer cotton slips in summer because they are cool and inexpensive and can be put in the family wash or sent to the laundry. The tendency of cotton to cling can be lessened by choosing a very smooth, highly mercerized fabric or those now sold as nonclinging. In fact under very full cotton evening dresses of organdy, Swiss, and the like, a cotton slip is ideal. Besides giving the necessary body, it has the advantage of not being so transparent as either silk or rayon.

Prewashed, or preshrunk material in a slip is essential to permanent fit. Since it needs to fit the figure smoothly from the start, a slip that shrinks may not even be wearable after one washing. Printed facts about colorfastness in slips are rare, but it is well to ask if the color will be affected by washing or perspiration.

## *Style and Fit*

The fit of costume slips is of so much concern to women in their desire for smooth slimness that every manufacturer is developing and promoting his own idea of the perfect-fitting slip. But because figures differ, what fits one woman is not necessarily right for another. For that reason, never buy a slip without first trying it on to see that cut as well as size is right. A slip should mold smoothly over the bust, under the arms, about the waist, and down to the hips, and hang straight or flared, but even, from that line to the lower edge.

Slips of simple design are most adaptable to different types of dresses. For slender figures bias-cut slips are popular because they fit smoothly and comfortably and have but few seams. They have to be cut on a true bias, however, to avoid twisting, sagging, and binding. This type of slip

more than any other is likely to be bought too small because it stretches and so does not feel uncomfortable. When the slip is too small, the seams ripple, the slip hangs shorter at center back and front, and the natural tendency of a bias slip to ride up as one sits is exaggerated.

Women with stout figures or large hips usually find straight-cut slips more satisfactory. Since there is no crosswise give in this cut, the slip stays down over the knees when the wearer sits down, and it does not cup under the hips. These two qualities make straight-cut slips better suited for both stout and slender women when they wear sheer dresses.

There are also some designs that combine the flexible bias-cut top with the straight skirt. These are most satisfactory if made without side fastenings, which are troublesome in slips.

Before buying a slip, check the lower edge for even distance from the floor. Many women depend on the straps to take care of any necessary adjustment, but if a slip fits properly it cannot be drawn up or let down very much without spoiling the fit. In order not to show below the dress, a slip should be  $\frac{1}{4}$  or 1 inch shorter than the dress all the way around. Few slips hang evenly as they are purchased, but manufacturers of better-quality slips are now giving more attention to desired length and even hang, and some slips are made in three lengths—short, medium, and long.

## *Workmanship*

For all except the occasional slip that is dry-cleaned, washable construction is essential. Look for seams that are evenly and securely stitched with 15 to 18 stitches per inch and with thread that is neither too fine to hold nor too coarse to look well. Narrow French seams are appropriate on soft lightweight fabrics like French crepe and sheer nainsook, while lapped seams and narrow fells may be best for heavier satins and crepes made in tailored styles. When seams are bias-cut and will not fray as straight edges do, then lapped seams stitched on the right side and pinked on the wrong side are satisfactory. Simple lock stitching with about 18 to 20 stitches per inch for seams of this kind is flat and satisfactory for slips not subjected to very hard wear. The seams with zigzag stitching are stronger, but they often ripple and cause ridges that show through soft dresses. They also hold soil that can hardly be removed without rubbing, which eventually wears and breaks the stitching.

As a rule plain seams with no finish will not hold in most slip fabrics. Also stiff, cordlike standing fells are often disappointing. In making this fell a plain seam is made first, then one side is trimmed away, and the other is folded over and stitched down. The trimmed side is oftentimes cut much too close, so it pulls out and cannot be easily repaired.

In hand-made slips, even in those of the same type and price, workmanship varies considerably. Look for close, even stitching free of knots or looseness and securely fastened threads.

The lifetime of a slip depends much on its top edge and hem finishes. In general, look for strength and flatness.

Tailored slips with double tops and edge stitching wear well even though they are troublesome to iron. Easier to iron yet strong are narrow faced edges with double stitching.

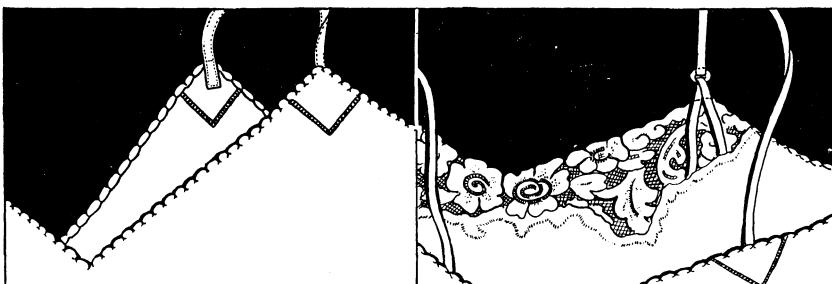
On more dainty slips, lace is common trim. The better slips have a conservative amount of lace trim, uniform in strength, with no delicate weak spots or heavy cording that shows through a soft dress. To make certain that this lace is securely applied look for close zigzag stitching and enough fabric allowance underneath to prevent pulling out in washing.

Whenever binding is used as a finish, wear is uncertain. There is no way of knowing whether the allowance inside the binding is enough to keep it from pulling out. Hemmed top edges are weak and do not hold the shape of the slip, but for the lower edge a small hem is desirable.

Shell-stitched, fagoted, and embroidered edges are neat, flat, and reasonably durable. They are more attractive and more flexible when done by hand than by machine, but also more expensive. As lower-edge finishes they are too expensive, and they do not permit alterations.

Trims, other than the edge finishes, are embroidery, drawn work, and applique. Such decoration is in good taste only when simple and not seen through the dress. It should always be flat, not troublesome to iron, or weakening to the fabric. Drawn work weakens the fabric and is not desirable on any except luxury garments.

Shoulder straps are usually made of ribbon or of self material folded narrow and stitched on the edges. Stitched straps are more durable, but the way they are attached to the slip is important. If the straps are attached to the edge finish, whether shell, binding, or embroidery, there should be reinforcements of extra fabric. Where there is lace, straps should extend underneath to the slip fabric for support. Many times they are less damaging to a slip where support comes from two points rather than one. Be sure straps are long enough. If they are too short the slip is strained and is likely to tear.



Two good types of strap attachment. Note (left) the block of reinforcement; (right) the double strap to prevent strain at one point on the lace.